

followed them, regarded the author of "Los Rougon-Macquart" as a revolutionist. His turbulence and self-assertiveness alarmed them, and it is indeed quite likely that if he had been elected he would have disturbed their quietude in many ways and possibly have seized the lion's share in the control of the Academy's labours. There was also, of course, the question of the outspokenness of Naturalism, which weighed considerably with one section of the Academy;¹ though it was never — as some English writers have assumed it to be — the chief cause of Zola's failure. Their error sprang from their ignorance of the Trench character. If among those who voted against Zola there were half a dozen Academicians who firmly objected to his bluntness of expression, the majority was not disposed to magnify molehills into mountains, particularly as the Rabelaisian sense is common to many Frenchmen. But there were a score of Academicians who hated what they called the "revolutionary spirit" of Zola's writings, and who feared, too, that this pushing, energetic man who had been called "the Shark," as he himself admitted with a chuckle, might swallow them up if he became a member of their body. At all events such is the explanation

given privately to the writer by some who supported Zola's earlier candidatures, and they ought to know the truth. Later, as already indicated, the religious question arose, and the opposition to Zola then became the more determined owing to the influence which Cardinal Perraud

¹ It is notorious that Taine, who led a section of the Academicians, that of the "university men," opposed Zola because he used vulgar and even slang words in some of his writings. Taine, moreover, was in full sympathy with the aristocratic element in the Academy with respect to its endeavours to make the institution a kind of deadly-lively social club.